

## **Pierce County Agriculture Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes – February 28, 2018**

Wednesday, February 28, 2018, 6:30pm-8pm

Allmendinger Center

WSU Puyallup Extension and Research Center

2606 W Pioneer Ave

Puyallup, WA 98371

### **Attendance**

Committee members:

Jim Kropf - WSU-Pierce County Extension Director, Dan Hulse - Tahoma Farms and Terra Organics, Rawley Johnson – Early Bird Farm, Carrie Little – Little Eorthe Farm, Ben DeGoede – Windmill Gardens and DeGoede Farms, Jerome O’Leary (alternate for Ken Scholz) – Snowshoe Evergreen, David Schactler – Eatonville Nursery, Jake Sterino – Sterino Farms, Becky Weed – Harlow Cattle Company, Councilmember Pam Roach – Pierce County Council, Paul Mosby – Mosby Farms.

Dan Muir – Coordinator, Pierce County Agriculture Advisory Committee

Guest Speakers:

Jordan Jobe – WSU – Farming in the Floodplain Project, Kirk Kirkland - Tahoma Audubon.

Members of the public:

Hugh Taylor – Office of Pierce County Council, Gwen Vernon – Coordinator, Agriculture Community of Interest, Kathryn Mahan – representing self.

### **Meeting**

Dan Muir welcomed all to the meeting and reviewed the agenda. Committee accepted agenda with no changes.

Dan Muir asked Committee to review minutes of January 24, 2018 meeting. A spelling correction was noted. Dave Schactler made a motion to approve the minutes. Becky Weed seconded. Minutes approved through unanimous yes vote.

Dan Muir opened discussion on electing a chair for the Committee. Carrie Little volunteered to take the Chair on a temporary basis until a permanent Chair can be appointed. Rawley Johnson nominated Carrie Little for Chair. Paul Mosby seconded. The Committee voted yes unanimously for Carrie Little to be Committee Chair on a temporary basis until a permanent Chair is appointed.

### **Guest Speakers**

Jordan Jobe presented the Committee with two handouts: Pierce County Drainage Support and a memorandum on Agriculture Special Interest Districts. Main point is that agriculture and ditch drainage in Pierce County is not good and needs to be improved.

#### Recommend next steps

1. Advocate for full-time staff member working in Pierce County as “drainage point person”
2. Articulate the economic importance of well-drained agricultural land
3. Articulate the hydrologic importance of well-drained agricultural land
4. Continue to support Drainage Districts, and work to make them viable

Pam Roach requested that Hugh Taylor compile a current inventory of Drainage Districts in Pierce County. Dan Muir will distribute to Committee.

Pam Roach suggested that the Committee find ordinances that are successful in other Counties and present them to the County Council for adoption in Pierce County.

Pam Roach reminded the Committee that the Pierce County Council expects to receive advice and council from this Committee. The Committee will develop recommendations, ordinances, etc. and have herself or other council members sponsor those topics before the Council.

Paul Mosby suggested that if we look to adopt successful ordinances from other Counties we need to examine if there are local laws that would prevent us from doing so. Hugh Taylor can support the Committee in this regard (policy concepts, policy changes, regulatory changes, etc. that can be prepared and presented to the Council and incorporated into legislation that the Council can act upon). Hugh Taylor reiterated that the County Council is looking to the Committee to provide recommendations that can be explored further.

Jerome O’Leary inquired of Jordan Jobe’s latitude for further involvement in working with the Committee on drainage topics. Jordan Jobe replied that she is fully funded through a grant to work on these issues. Jerome O’Leary stated that he believes it is critical to keep Jordan Jobe and her work involved with the Committee at this stage.

Dan Hulse inquired about the differences between Drainage Districts, Irrigation Districts and Watershed Improvement Districts and how they are funded. He wondered if there was any support in Pierce County for the fee based, property tax assessment model to support a full time Drainage District position.

Rawley Johnson suggested that it might be helpful for the Committee to invite a current Drainage District commissioner to share with the Committee their experiences.

Jordan Jobe stated that currently in Pierce County Drainage Districts need to be bigger and have better funding to be successful. Other options are to dissolve the Drainage Districts and rely on the County to take on the role of tackling these issues or to dissolve the Drainage Districts and form a Watershed Improvement District. All options should be on the table in determining how to move forward.

Kirk Kirkland stated that one of the goals of the national Audubon Society is to support working farms. Locally they see drainage as a big problem. They are looking at a pilot program to show immediate improvements over the next two years and they want to replace culverts in key places. The County has some money to use on this project. They want to see if ag production increases on the fields affected by

the project. The proposal is to use existing County funds to repair culverts and roadside ditches in Rhody Creek and Clear Creek and show a direct impact on increased farm production.

Jordan Jobe spoke about research that will occur over the next year on how to separate Clear Creek from the agriculture drainage system and how that will help farmers. It would be beneficial because the farmer can maintain their ditches how they want as it does not interact with the creek habitat.

### **Ag Resource Land (ARL)**

Jerome O'Leary stated that ARL remains an important topic and the Committee needs to be actively informed, so it can act in a timely manner for making comment. Hugh Taylor will prepare a current ARL summary and Dan Muir will distribute to the Committee. Paul Mosby stated it is important to be proactive and not reactive on the ARL issue. Paul Mosby suggested that Councilmember Derrick Young be invited to a future Committee meeting as we address the ARL topic.

### **Other topics**

Pam Roach mentioned that the Committee can work on several issues at once and should be prepared to move topics forward without delaying.

Dan Muir asked for confirmation on future meeting locations. The Committee decided that the Allmendinger Center at WSU Puyallup campus will be the permanent meeting location for the remainder of the year.

### **Meeting adjourned**